

**SOCIAL ISSUES SCRUTINY PANEL****11 July 2007****Attendance:**

## Councillors:

Tait (Chairman) (P)

Barratt (P)

Berry (P)

Biggs (P)

Chapman (P)

Hammerton (P)

Hicks (P)

Izard (P)

Love (P)

Stephens (P)

Weston (P)

**TACT Representatives:**

Mr Rickman and Mr Bond

**Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:**

Councillor Pearson (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety)

Councillor Coates (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities)

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**1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillors Coates and Pearson both declared a personal and prejudicial interest due to their involvement as Cabinet Members in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

However, the Panel asked the Portfolio Holders to remain in the meeting, under the provisions of Sections 21(13)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that they could provide additional information to the Panel and/or answer questions.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman thanked the previous Chairman, Councillor Hammerton, for her work during the prior year.

## RESOLVED:

That Councillor Weston be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

**3.**

### **APPOINTMENT OF TACT CO-OPTees**

The Chairman thanked TACT for their continuing involvement in the work of the Panel.

RESOLVED:

That Mr A Rickman and Mr J Bond be appointed as TACT co-optees on the Panel for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

### 4. **TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

RESOLVED:

That future meetings of the Panel commence at 6.30pm for the 2007/08 Municipal Year and that the timetable of scheduled meetings for the 2007/08 Municipal Year be noted.

### 5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 14 March 2007 be approved and adopted.

### 6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

The Chairman commented that the Panel should consider how members of the public could be encouraged to participate in future meetings, perhaps by holding meetings at venues outside the Guildhall. This was noted.

### 7. **PRESENTATION FROM HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION DIVISION – OVERVIEW OF WORK RELATING TO SOCIAL ISSUES SCRUTINY PANEL**

(Oral Report)

The Head of Partnership and Communications explained that, due to the recent Council reorganisation, it had not been possible to prepare a performance monitoring report for the newly reconfigured Division. Therefore, she gave a presentation outlining the main functions of the Division and emphasising the connections with work of the Panel. A copy of the presentation is available on the Information for Members page on the Council's Intranet.

The Head of Partnership and Communications responded to questions on her presentation and, in particular, clarified where the resources for the various initiatives would come from. She confirmed that any new resources required would be subject to approval by Cabinet.

The Panel also asked a number of questions about the likely locations and operation of the Children's Centres. It was noted that this was primarily a County Council function, however Members suggested that a representative be invited to a future Panel meeting, to provide further information on issues such as location and

resourcing. The Head of Partnership and Communications agreed to investigate the feasibility of this suggestion further.

The Panel also queried the likely composition of the 'Older Peoples' Forum' and stressed the importance of linking with existing groups covering similar fields.

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of the presentation on the work of the Partnerships and Communication Division be noted.

2. That the possibility of a County Council representative being invited to a future meeting to discuss the proposed Children's Centres be investigated.

8. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2007/08**  
(Report SO44 refers)

The Panel welcomed the new format and presentation of the performance monitoring information and believed it enabled a greater focus on key issues.

Councillor Coates and the Head of Strategic Housing responded to Members' questions about the ongoing difficulties of providing sufficient affordable housing in the District. He confirmed that all of the funds received from the agreed sale by the Council of a small number of its housing stock would be used to support affordable housing provision.

Mr Rickman stated that TACT would be lobbying the Government to allow the funds from such sales to be put towards new Council owned housing, rather than Registered Social Landlords as at present.

With regard to which other topics the Panel would like to see covered in the new format performance monitoring, the following points were made:

- indication in affordable housing figures as to the different proportions of shared ownership and rented properties. The Panel also queried whether it would be possible to show the income levels of housing applicants;
- further information on housing voids monitoring;
- information on Community Safety;
- information on Anti-Social Behaviour (if possible, split into geographical areas).

RESOLVED:

1. That the performance monitoring information contained within the Report be noted.

2. That the content and format of the report cards (as attached to Report SO44) be welcomed.

3. That the additional topics outlined above be included in future report cards.

9. **HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO HOLDERS REPORT – 2006/07 PERFORMANCE OUTTURN – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

(Report SO41 refers)

Mr Rickman drew the Panel's attention to the TACT comments as outlined in the Report.

The Head of Strategic Housing responded to Panel questions on the Council's duties to re-house unintentionally homeless people and emphasised that this area was governed by legislation.

The Head of Landlord Services confirmed that the "open days" to encourage the re-letting of a number of sheltered housing properties had been very successful and further such events might be held in the future, if considered appropriate.

The Head of Landlord Services responded to questions about the level of former tenant arrears. He emphasised that Government guidance anticipated that local authorities would be unable to recover approximately 90 per cent of such arrears. However, the Council had managed to recover more than this. He also highlighted that the Council's performance on collecting current arrears was good.

One Member queried the figures on BV66b and LPI RA 03, as set out in Appendix 3 to the Report. The Head of Landlord Services agreed to investigate the apparent discrepancy further.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.

10. **ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY PORTFOLIO – 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING – COMMUNITY SAFETY**

(Report SO42 refers)

In updating the information provided in the Report, Councillor Pearson reported that the expanded Alcohol Exclusion Zone was now in place. However, the issue regarding the location of the CCTV control room had not yet been resolved, although it was hoped this would be achieved before the next Panel meeting. He also noted the concerns relating to the current operation of the Bishops Waltham CCTV system, which were being investigated.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.

11. **HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO HOLDER – 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUTTURN – HOUSING GENERAL FUND AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

(Report SO43 refers)

The Head of Strategic Housing reported that a presentation would take place on 24 July 2007 on the initial findings of the Housing Market Assessment to which all Members were invited.

He advised that it was not believed that there would be any reduction in Government funding available because of Portsmouth City Council withdrawing from the Choice

Based Letting project. He stated that Portsmouth City Council had withdrawn upon receipt of advice that the scheme would have a negative impact on the re-let time of their housing stock. However, he did not consider that this would be the case, based on existing evidence.

The Head of Strategic Housing responded to questions about the re-housing of homeless people. He stressed that the Council worked to try and prevent a person becoming homeless in the first place, for example by negotiating with families.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.

12. **WORK PROGRAMME AND APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINY PANELS**  
(Report SO45 refers)

The Head of Strategic Housing advised that the proposed Homeless Informal Scrutiny Group would scrutinise the emerging Homelessness Strategy.

RESOLVED:

1. That neither the Housing Information Systems nor the Former Tenant Arrears Groups be reappointed, but that their final reports be brought to the next meeting of the Panel.

2. That a Homelessness Informal Scrutiny Group be established with membership as follows:  
Councillors: Tait, Berry, Hammerton and Love  
TACT: A Rickman

13. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**  
(Report PS284 refers)

It was noted that the Report from the Housing Information Systems Informal Scrutiny Group had been due to be submitted to this meeting. The Head of Strategic Housing advised that the final Report would be submitted to the next Panel meeting instead.

The Head of Performance and Scrutiny noted the request made earlier in the meeting for more information on the proposed Children's Centres.

One Member requested more information about what the Council was doing in terms of provision for Older People.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the matters raised above, the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS284, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.45pm

Chairman